SEARCHLIGHTS AND SUNGLASSES
LEARNING LAYER

Is imagination better than extrapolation?

Innovative breakthroughs often are inspired by intergalactic sagas and other futuristic stories. Ideas that seem far outside the box can prove in time to be the most relevant. For example, for years sci-fi movies have shown a world in which robots are just as intelligent as humans. Now that world is nearly here, and some are proposing that humans and robots can work together in the newsroom. It's one of many ideas from sci-fi movies that is proving true.

Review and choose an activity:

Flashlight: Pick a sci-fi book from the list below or a popular sci-fi movie. Review, then discuss the forms of technology they predicted. How accurately did the book or movie predict the future? (Example: Star Trek replicators and today's 3D printers, or The Terminator's visual screen and Google Glass.) Are there predictions that haven't yet come true? Do they include new forms of media that you wish existed today?

Spotlight: Explore the Paleofuture blog by Matt Novak, writer for Gizmodo.com. Browse through the decades from 1870s-1990s. Find at least two media elements that were predicted accurately and two that were not. Why did some come to life while others never got past the drawing board? Try to make connections between ideas rooted in the original time and setting and those that looked beyond what was already there.

Searchlight: Writes Nate Silver in *The Signal and the Noise*: "If our appreciation of uncertainty improves, our predictions can get better too." Research the book and Nate Silver's blog with a book by an out-of-the-box thinker such as *The Innovator's Dilemma*, by Clayton Christensen. What is the secret of Silver's success as a predictor? Does his form of predictive analytics make sense, given what Christensen says? Make your own predictions for the future based on these principles. Does the use of data allow you to see far into the future, or does the crystal ball get cloudy?

Suggested science fiction novels: *The Time Machine*, H.G. Wells; *I, Robot*, Isaac Asimov; *He, She and It,* Marge Piercy; *The Sparrow*, Mary Doria Russell; *The Bohr Maker*, Linda Nagata; *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom,* Cory Doctorow. Novels with a biological twist: *Frankenstein,* Mary Shelley*; InfoQuake*, David Louis Edelman; *Blood Music*, Greg Bear; *Beyond This Horizon*, Robert Heinlein; *The Diamond Age*, Neal Stephenson.

Books promoting out-of-the-box thinking: *The Innovator's Dilemma*, Clayton Christensen*; A Whack on the Side of the Head: How You Can Be More Creative,* Roger van Oech; *What a Great Idea*, Chick Thompson; *Thriving in E-Chaos*, James Underwood; *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell; *How to Read a Book*, Mortimer Jerome Adler; *What Would Google Do?*, Jeff Jarvis; *Innovation,* Richard Foster.